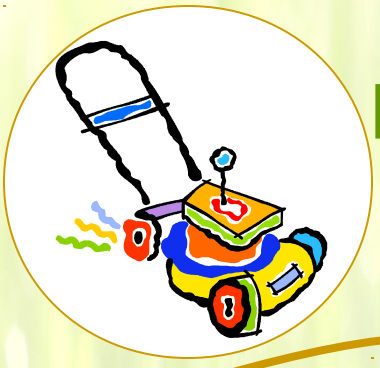
SUMMER Safety Notes on…



LAWN MOWER & OTHER SUMMER TOOL SAFETY

One of the most familiar yet hazardous chores of summertime is mowing the lawn. The number of lawn mower injuries has steadily increased over the past twenty years. In 1986, the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) reported 37,000 people were treated in the emergency room for injuries sustained while mowing the lawn. Today, the estimated number of lawn mower injuries requiring emergent care numbers 80,000. This is 2 out of every 1,000 injury-related emergency department visits or half the number of patients treated for firearm injuries annually. Common injuries attributed to lawn mower use include deep cuts, loss of fingers and toes, broken and dislocated bones, burns, and eye and other injuries. Unbeknownst to users, lawn mower injuries can occur to bystanders as well.

Choose the right mower for the job. For small areas – push mowers will suffice. Larger areas require a larger machine such as a riding mower. Push mowers should always be pushed – never pulled – across a slope. Riding mowers are best used up and down a slope. Both machines require the lawn to be free of obstructions to include people and pets and projectiles such as toys, sticks, and stones. In addition, both require the use of personal protective equipment or PPE such as sturdy, non-slip shoes; close fitting clothes; earplugs; and safety glasses.

With lawn care comes tree trimming and weed pulling. Recent studies have shown that gardening not only improves mental health but physical as well. Trimming trees or shrubs requires nearly the same amount of energy as a leisurely bicycle ride. Just remember if you need a ladder – use it as such. Ladders were not meant to be used as scaffolding or a runway. Always keep your belt buckle or belly button between the rails. Overreaching can cause the ladder to move resulting in injury. If you cannot complete your task on a ladder, find another safe way to do so. Lifting gardening supplies is comparable to weight training. Keep it simple – never lift with your back. Always bend with your knees.

Spread safety to your storage shed or garages too. Lawn and gardening equipment should always be stored and cleaned after they are used. This regular maintenance will guarantee a long life for your equipment. Any hazardous materials such as pesticides or gasoline should never be stored in an overabundance. Purchase only enough materials to last the current season. Materials should be kept in their original containers. The original labels will not only identify the product and its use but also what to do in case of an emergency.

Like all recreational activities, it is imperative to stretch before working in your garden. Know your limitations and strengths. Vary your activities, use the right tools for the job, and take regular rest and hydration breaks.

Be safe now so you can enjoy some fun in the sun later!